PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER...

For the past several weeks I’ve been writing to you about bits and pieces that can help you to achieve a more interesting/effective look to your design. Today we’re going to chat about how to weave these concepts into a cohesive and well designed “whole.”

WHERE DO I START???

There is always more than one way to any end. I’m going to offer you one approach to consider.

- Go through your sound track and start to determine where/when and what each planned effect/event will be. This includes equipment or dance or drill.
- Consider where on the stage you want to present this event, then consider how you are going to bring the performers to that point on stage. (motion, travel mode, etc.)
- Experiment with different “sets” or “shapes” on which you will layer your equipment or body idea. Pick the one that most successfully provides the look you want.
- Don’t forget options such as small groupings, big filled form, geometric shape, etc.
- Continue on with your next idea/effect/event. Follow the same questions and process.
- Always be sensitive to how you will reshape the staging or move to the next idea. If you progress in this manner, you will see a “blueprint” start to take shape.
- Keep in mind the importance of creating interesting transitions/developments from one idea to the next.
- As you develop this plan, ask yourself if you are getting repetitious, using similar “sets” or “patterns” for presentation. If you are, please explore a different set or stage.
- Do you alter the method of travel from set to set? Do they dance, run or walk to the next set?
- Are you utilizing the same spacing in each set? Remember we talked about changing the space to create visual interest and visual dynamics?

When you have the whole plan roughly sketched out you will be able to see how the pacing of your effects unfolds through time. Pacing is a major consideration in GE. How long an interval is there from one effect to the next? Are all the effects at a similar level of impact? By that I mean, some might be huge with the full ensemble doing a dynamic hit and some might be smaller with only a single segment presentation. This becomes important in the shaping and contouring of your program. This is where the music guides you.

OK, WHAT’S THE NEXT STEP?

You’ve got the “concept” roughly sketched out and the blueprint is starting to take shape. Now we’re going to talk about the “composing” process. Composing is the arrangement of shapes, forms and events into a cohesive whole. Let’s use an analogy to take this a step further. Think about arranging the furniture and accessories in a living room. Consider the balance and interest of your choices. Think about the color coordination and the various art pieces you may choose for a table. Consider the wall art. Think about how you unify this plan to make the room look like it is one single plan and not a series of random unrelated items. **Think about taste.** Make sure that you have a unity among/between all of your elements. If you have 2 or 3 segments on the stage, coordinate their efforts and be sure they are complimentary to one another. Unity is the aspect that ties design together and makes it work.

I know that you have been processing these memos over the weeks. Now it’s time to put your thoughts together, figure out what you can do and what you might need more clarification on. Please send me your questions or your concerns. I know that this is just a thumb-nail sketch of design, but if it’s enough to make you think a little harder or make some adjustments to the “functional” or “presentational” approach then it’s an important step. I am absolutely here to support your efforts so don’t hesitate to write and open up a dialog on any subject you wish.

**Shirlee Whitcomb**, Director of Color Guard Development ([Shirleewhitcomb@aol.com](mailto:Shirleewhitcomb@aol.com))